

(Figure 17). This situation abated in 1975 but reappeared during 1977-1980. In 1978 and 1980, virtually no scallops larger than 120 mm shell height were present in the size frequency samples, in striking contrast with previous years. Cull size in the 1980 offshore fishery was also lower than in preceding periods with sample meat counts as high as 80-85 count being observed (Table 26). In part, this resulted from increased shell stocking operations in 1980 and entry of Mid-Atlantic-based vessels into the Gulf of Maine fishery. In response to these circumstances, the States of Maine and Massachusetts prohibited the landing of sea scallops less than 3 inches (76 mm) in shell height at their ports.

The modal height of about 90 mm in the 1980 size frequency distributions (Figure 17) suggests that the offshore fishery was sustained primarily by recruitment from the 1975 year class (Table 20). This supposition is based on growth rate patterns of inshore Gulf of Maine scallops but, due to similarities between offshore and inshore height-weight equations (see SEA SCALLOP SHELL HEIGHT-MEAT WEIGHT RELATIONSHIPS) appears generally applicable to the offshore populations.

Provisional 1981 Gulf of Maine size frequency sampling data indicate a substantial decrease in sample meat counts from 1980 although this observation is derived from only three samples obtained during January-September 1981 (Tables 25 and 26).

Recreational Fishery

A limited recreational fishery for sea scallops exists in shallow, inshore waters north of Cape Cod in which scallops are retrieved by scuba diving. Most of this activity occurs in estuaries and embayments in the territorial waters of the State of Maine at depths less than 15 fathoms. Detailed landings data do not exist for the recreational fishery but it is probable that total annual recreational catches are considerably less than a metric ton of meats. The State of Maine limits the recreational catch of sea scallops to one gallon of shucked meats per person per day during the sea scallop season, November 1 through April 15.